

Message Text

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SUBJECT: MORNING SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REPORTS

1. INDIA'S PARLIAMENT: ROUND ONE TO THE CONGRESS PARTY

EMBASSY NEW DELHI REPORTS THAT PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED ITS FIRST SETBACK AT THE HANDS OF THE OPPOSITION. CLOSE ON THE HEELS OF THE CONCILIATORY APRIL 5 STATEMENT BY CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY CHIEF Y. B. CHAVAN, THE JANATA PARTY INTRODUCED A BILL TO REPEAL THE VARIOUS "BLACK LAWS" ENACTED UNDER THE EMERGENCY. MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, THE BILL PROVIDES FOR THE REPEAL OF A LAW EXTENDING THE LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE) AND STATE ASSEMBLY TERMS FROM FIVE YEARS TO SIX. MOST STATE ASSEMBLIES WERE ELECTED IN 1971, AND WOULD BE EFFECTIVELY DISSOLVED BY PASSAGE OF THE BILL.

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CONGRESS PARTY MP'S REACTED VIGOROUSLY, CHARGING THAT THE JANATA PARTY WAS ATTEMPTING TO RUSH NEW ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO GARNER ADDITIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY VOTES FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THIS SUMMER. THE SESSION WAS SO STORMY THAT, ACCORDING TO ONE PRO-JANATA MP, THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED NOT TO PRESS FOR PASSAGE DURING THE PRESENT SESSION. THE NEXT

OPPORTUNITY FOR A VOTE ON THE BILL WILL OCCUR DURING THE

BUDGET SESSION OF THE LOK SABHA IN MID-MAY, BUT THE GOVERNMENT MAY ELECT TO CALL A SPECIAL SESSION IN LATE APRIL TO REINTRODUCE THE BILL. (CONFIDENTIAL) NEW DELHI 5028, 4/7 AND (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) 4871, 4/6.)

2. SAUDI DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE COMES TO SOMALIA

EMBASSY MOGADISCIO REPORTS THAT THE VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD TO SOMALIA IS VIEWED AS AN IMPORTANT SUCCESS FOR THE MODERATE ARAB STATES IN THEIR CAMPAIGN TO WOO SOMALIA AWAY FROM THE SOVIETS. THE EMBASSY NOTES THAT:

--THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT HAS BEGUN A SERIES OF SEMINARS ON "RED SEA SECURITY" FOR CIVIL SERVANTS, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS, EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR ARAB SOLIDARITY TO ENSURE A REGIONAL "ZONE OF PEACE."

--THE MEDIA IS HEAVILY PROMOTING SOMALIA'S ARAB TIES, POSSIBLY INDICATING THAT PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE IS TRYING TO ACCUSTOM HIS PEOPLE TO A FOREIGN POLICY SHIFT TOWARD THE MODERATE ARAB STATES.

EMBASSY COMMENT: WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY HOW FAR SIAD INTENDS TO ACCOMMODATE ARAB INTERESTS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOMALIA, MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE US HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE ITS POSITION THERE. ONE CONFIDENTIAL

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DIPLOMAT, HOWEVER, WARNS THAT SIAD MAY FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO STRIKE OUT AT THE US IN SOME FASHION DURING THIS TRANSITION PERIOD IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIS POLITICAL FLANKS. (CONFIDENTIAL) MOGADISCIO 596, 4/7.)

3. VESCO EXTRADITION: TIME IS RUNNING OUT

EMBASSY SAN JOSE REPORTS THAT OUR PROSPECTS FOR EXTRADITING ROBERT VESCO WILL VANISH BY JUNE 28, WHEN HE BECOMES ELIGIBLE FOR COSTA RICAN CITIZENSHIP. THE EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THAT AN INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE BE SET UP TO PROCEED WITH A REQUEST TO EXTRADITE VESCO, NOTING THAT:

--VESCO'S PRESENCE IS AN IRRITANT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS AND IS WIDELY PERCEIVED AS A CORRUPTIVE INFLUENCE IN COSTA RICA.

--MANY COSTA RICANS BELIEVE THE US FAILURE TO PROCEED WITH EXTRADITION REQUESTS IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED.

--IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UPHOLD US JUSTICE.

THE EMBASSY FURTHER NOTES THAT THE COSTA RICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION TAKES PLACE IN FEBRUARY 1978 AND CORRUPTION, WITH THE VESCO AFFAIR AT ITS CENTER, WILL BE THE OPPOSITION'S KEY ISSUE. THE LONGER WE DELAY OUR DECISION ON EXTRADITION, THE MORE LIKELY THAT OUR FINAL DECISION WILL BE SEEN IN COSTA RICA AS AN EFFORT TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION. (CONFIDENTIAL) SAN JOSE 1477, 4/6.)

4. WHITE FARMER ELECTED TO ZAMBIAN PARLIAMENT

EMBASSY LUSAKA REPORTS THAT ON MARCH 31 A PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION IN ROAN CONSTITUENCY CONTESTED BY THREE UNITED NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE PARTY (UNIP) NOMINEES WAS WON IN A LANDSLIDE BY ARTHUR E. PIER, A WHITE FARMER FROM LUANSHYA. CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESIDENT KAUNDA CONGRATULATED PIER AND SAID HIS ELECTION WAS "A VINDICATION OF OUR BELIEF THAT ALL ZAMBIANS, REGARDLESS OF RACE, COLOR, CREED OR STATION IN LIFE CAN RISE TO A POSITION OF LEADERSHIP IN THE NATION."

EMBASSY COMMENT: PIER WILL BE THE ONLY WHITE IN PARLIAMENT. HIS ELECTION OVER TWO BLACK OPPONENTS, WHILE A TRIBUTE TO ZAMBIA'S MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY, MAY ALSO BE READ AS AN EXPRESSION OF VOTER DISCONTENT. THE TURNOUT AT THE POLLS WAS SPARSE, WITH ONLY 29 PERCENT PARTICIPATION, AND TENDS TO CONFIRM UNIP FEARS THAT THE GENERAL ELECTION IN 1978 MAY BE MARKED BY MASSIVE ABSTENTIONS. (CONFIDENTIAL) LUSAKA 901, 4/6.)
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